

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 17356

LIMDIS

FROM ENVOY WALTERS' OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, VT
SUBJECT: VATICAN CRITICIZES ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN WEST BANK
AND JERUSALEM

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: BREAKING A LONG SILENCE AND IN UNUSUALLY DIRECT MANNER, THE

VATICAN ON OCTOBER 8 CRITICIZED ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES BECAUSE THEY ARE "CONTRARY" TO UN RESOLUTIONS AND TO
THE GENEVA CONVENTION 1949 AND BECAUSE "OBJECTIVELY" THEY PLACE
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"OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF EFFORTS TO PROMOTE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS" IN
THE MIDDLE EAST. END SUMMARY

2. ON OCTOBER 8, VATICAN ORGAN "L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO" CARRIED LENGHTY
FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE WHICH TRACES THE RECENT HISTORY OF ISRAELI
SETTLEMENTS, AND THE INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS WHICH THEY ENGENDERED,
AND SEVERELY CRITICIZES ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS POLICIES PARTICULARLY IN

THE WEST BANK AND AROUND JERUSALEM. IT STATES THAT THE CRITICISM OF THESE POLICIES EMANATES FROM TWO BASES: (A) ON THE CONVICTION THAT THEY ARE CONTRARY TO UN RESOLUTIONS AND ESPECIALLY TO "THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 1949" WHICH PROHIBITS OCCUPYING POWERS FROM DEPORTING OR TRANSFERRING POPULATIONS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES; AND (B) ON THE IMPEDIMENTS IT PUTS IN WAY OF NEGOTIATIONS. "IN SUBSTANCE," SAYS THE ARTICLE, "IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PROMOTE NEGOTIATIONS WHILE INITIATIVES ARE UNDERTAKEN WHICH PREJUDICE THE SOLUTION."

3. IT IS CLEAR, THE VATICAN ARTICLE MAINTAINS, THAT A "MASSIVE JEWISH PRESENCE" IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WOULD MAKE THEIR RESTITUTION TO THE ARABS IMPOSSIBLE, AND IN THE CASE OF THE WEST BANK THE INTRODUCTION OF JEWISH POPULATION DESTROYS AT THE ROOTS THE PLANS FOR CONSTITUTING A "PALESTINIAN HOMELAND" THEREBY RESOLVING THE PALESTINE PROBLEM WHICH HAS BECOME THE MOST COMPLEX AND FUNDAMENTAL NOT TO THE INTRICATE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. WITH REGARD TO HEBREW SETTLEMENTS AROUND JERUSALEM, THE ARTICLE POINTS OUT THAT WHILE REGARDING THE HOLY CITY, "THE DISCOURSE COULD BE LONG, GIVEN THE DELICATE AND COMPLEX NATURE OF THE PROBLEM," IT APPEARED THAT "AROUND IT THERE HAVE ARISEN MANY NEW VILLAGES POPULATED BY HEBREWS, AS IF TO GUARANTEE THE IRREVERSIBILITY OF THE NEW SITUATIONS CREATED IN JERUSALEM."

4. THE VATICAN ARTICLE ALSO CITES THE REACTIONS TO THE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS POLICY BY THE U.S., THE UNSECGEN, GREAT BRITAIN,
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FRANCE AND THE EEC. INSOFAR AS THE U.S. POSITION IS CONCERNED, THE ARTICLE DRAWS ON STATE DEPARTMENT STATEMENTS DATED JUNE 27 AND JULY 26 AND FROM PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 7.

5. ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH AN EXPRESSION OF HOPE THAT THE CURRENTLY INTENSIFYING EFFORTS TO END THE CONFLICT SHOULD NOT BE FRUSTRATED IN ANY MANNER AND THEN QUOTES TWO SIGNIFICANT PAST STATEMENTS OF POPE PAUL APPEALING TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RESOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. THESE STATEMENTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. STATEMENT OF JUNE 23, 1974: "FOR OUR PART, WE DO NOT WISH TO LET PASS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENCOURAGE ALL AUTHORITIES TO SPARE NO EFFORT OF GOOD WILL AND POLITICAL WISDOM IN THE SEARCH FOR A JUST AND PROPER WAY FOR DISSOLVING THE KNOT--SO DIFFICULT AND PAINFUL--REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE PALESTINE POPULATION."

B. STATEMENT OF DECEMBER 22, 1975: "BECAUSE WE ARE AWARE OF THE RECENT TRAGEDY WHICH STIMULATED THE HEBREW PEOPLE TO SEARCH FOR A SECURE AND PROTECTED HOMELAND IN ITS OWN SOVEREIGN AND INDEPENDENT

STATE, INDEED EXACTLY BECAUSE OF THIS, WE WOULD LIKE TO INVITE THE
SONS OF THIS PEOPLE TO RECOGNIZE THE RIGHTS AND LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS

OF ANOTHER PEOPLE, WHICH ALSO HAS BEEN LONG-SUFFERING, THE
PEOPLE OF PALESTINE." END UNCLASSIFIED

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL LIMDIS

6. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE VATICAN PURPOSEFULLY TIMED THE PUBLICATION
OF ITS REACTION TO ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS TO COINCIDE WITH THE CANONIZATION

CEREMONY OF THE LEBANESE SAINT CHARBEL MAKHLOUF, WHICH TOOK PLACE
OCTOBER 9, TO UNDERLINE ITS LONG-STANDING THESIS THAT A DEFINITIVE
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SETTLEMENT OF THE LEBANESE PROBLEM IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THE
RESOLUTION OF THE OVERALL PALESTINIAN ISSUE. VATICAN HAS LONG FELT
THAT

THE PRESENCE OF SOME 350,000 PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON RADICALLY
DISTORTED THE CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM BALANCE IN THE COUNTRY. VATICAN
ARTICLE WAS, IN ADDITION, PARTIALLY IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS ARAB
DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES TO THE VATICAN TO BREAK SILENCE ON THE
MATTER. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT THE VATICAN STATEMENT REPRESENTS THE
"QUID" REQUESTED BY SUCH ARAB MODERATES AS EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA
FOR RENDERING A HELPFUL HAND TO VATICAN'S APPEAL FOR RENEWING
POLITICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON.
UNDERSTANDABLY, THIS UNUSUAL, CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCAL VATICAN
STATEMENT HAS DISTURBED THE GOI TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT ON OCTOBER 21,
A SPECIAL GOI EMISSARY WAS SENT TO THE VATICAN FOR A MEETING WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER CASAROLI. PRIOR TO THE MEETING, CASAROLI TOLD
PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY TO VATICAN WALTERS, OCTOBER 21, THAT HE WOULD
TELL GOI EMISSARY THAT HOLY SEE COULD NOT REMAIN SILENT ON THE ISSUE
BECAUSE ISRAELI SETTLEMENT POLICY WAS CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL LAW
AND MORALITY AND THAT CONTINUING SUCH A POLICY WOULD FRUSTRATE
EFFORTS TOWARDS A JUST PEACE. END CONFIDENTIAL LIMDIS HOLMES

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